

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance
Environmental Education Network
Inaugural Meeting June 21-23, 2006
Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Environmental Learning Center
Naples, Florida**

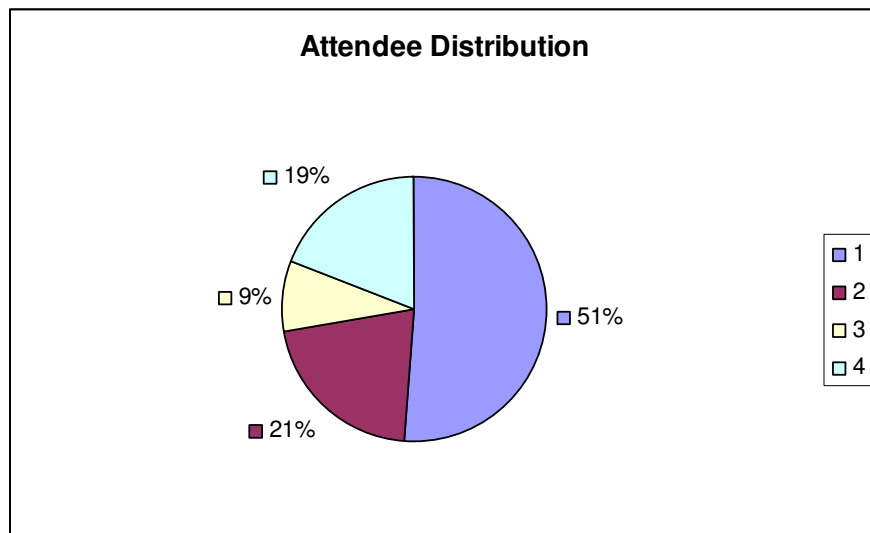
Workshop Summary

Introduction

The Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network has two primary goals within the *Governor's Action Plan for a Healthy and Resilient Coast*. Within those two goals are nine action blueprint commitments over the initial 36-month term of the Alliance. Hosting a planning workshop was one of the nine actions. This was conducted by the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve System with support from the State of Florida. A two day agenda was conducted June 21-23, 2006 at the Environmental Learning Center in Naples, Florida.

Attendees

Forty-seven individuals were registered to attend the meeting including one participant from Mexico. Of the attendees, the representation of various groups is indicated in the pie chart.



- 1 = Other: NEPs, NERRs, aquariums, NGOs, media, and similar organizations
- 2 = Federal Agencies
- 3 = State Agencies
- 4 = Education Organizations such as Sea Grants and Universities

Agenda

The purpose of the meeting was to engage the newly established Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network at Florida's Rookery Bay NERR to review priority goals, actions, and funding needs. This new Network of individuals would create the core of a developing web of connected professionals around the Gulf to better facilitate and communicate education and outreach objectives. An additional end result of the Network will be to reach those not traditionally associated with this group of professionals.




Day One began in the afternoon revolving around introductions, overview of the Alliance, and the mission of the workshop followed by an evening social with Commissioner Frank Halas of Collier County, Florida. Day Two involved a review of partners within each of the topical areas, a media panel with question / answer period, and lunch breakout sessions. A slight "mid-course correction" in the agenda shifted the afternoon focus to a review of prior existing actions to include those finalized but not making the *Governor's Action Plan*. Some brainstorming occurred during this period. The final day of the program involved network organization discussions, prioritization of some of the existing actions as well as new ones, and a brief resource identification review.

Initial Outcomes

It is important to note that the *Governor's Action Plan* is an approved strategic set of actions to be accomplished in 36 months beginning March 2006. The clock is ticking. In 2005 a series of conference calls and meetings were held to refine the priority actions for Education and Outreach around the Gulf. Following Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma this document was further refined into the two existing goals and nine actions. These are the Environmental Education Network's first priorities. Additional actions may be addressed as significant progress is made on the approved plan goals.

Network Organization

One of the critical facets of the *Governor's Action Plan* is the development of a communication and education Network. This network's charge is to facilitate information sharing at multiple levels, transfer successes among members and maximize the impact of limited educational resources.

-  Facilitate enhanced communication among educators
-  Facilitate enhanced communication within the Alliance
-  Facilitate enhanced communication to other audiences

Participants brainstormed what the network would do as well as who might be involved. The attendees were broken down into six working groups; each group discussed potential strategies for the network's organizational framework. The results are as follows.

Group One

Coordinator in center. Small group around coordinator – leads implementing an action item – make sure all states represented. Different kinds of entities around Gulf form next ring – entities with and without physical structures – if entity is implementing action item, could be on steering committee. If have 7 action items, 7 serving on steering committee. Still need to figure out sites in Mexico.

Roles of coordinator:

- Synthesize info before shared with group
- Get info from steering committee, synthesize, share out key/relevant items with other members.
- Monitoring, performance measures.
- Coordination with other coordinators for Alliance priorities.

Meetings:

- One annual meeting for entire membership, maybe one other meeting for steering committee.

Group Two

- Kept Lee in middle.
- 2nd circle is representatives from all states, including Mexico, and Federal representatives (EPA, NOAA.) Need to make sure that people in circle communicating directly with Lee (steering committee) are committed, and supervisors are committed.
- 3rd circle is all of us here, and others (NERRs, NEPs, etc.) Each entity in this circle has a network they communicate with (e.g. Scott aquarium communicates with teachers.)
- Priority issue teams of Alliance communicate with Lee (coordinators for other priority issues – these positions aren't established yet but will be). Lee takes their needs and Disseminates out.
- As projects form, committees will form to work on a project.

Group Three

Who:

- Anyone can be a member (organization or individual)
- As part of membership they'd be asked to fill out application, and applicant would have to articulate how can contribute and how can get info out to public / disseminate.
- Doesn't have to be a place-based institution. Consultants, retirees could be members.

Steering Committee:

- Each priority issue should have a lead, states should have a lead – steering committee.
- Needs to be active committee. If state lead cannot attend, obligated to appoint someone to take their place.

Workgroups:

- Form from general membership. (e.g. workgroup to do a mass media campaign)
- Task focused. Report to steering committee, and they communicate to coordinator.

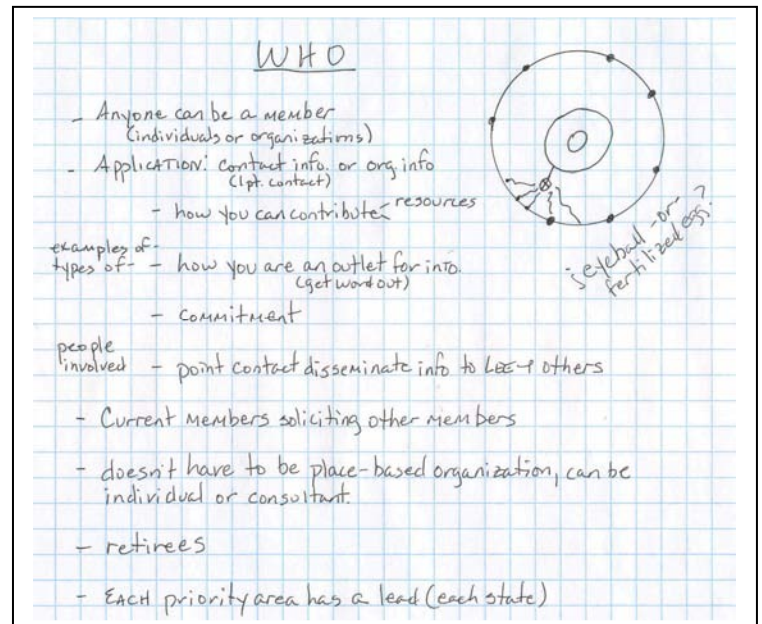
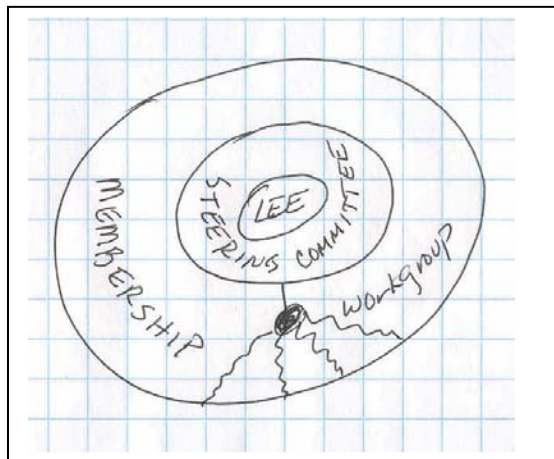
Meetings:

- Bi-annual mtg for general membership, no more than 2 days.
- Steering committee meets more often.

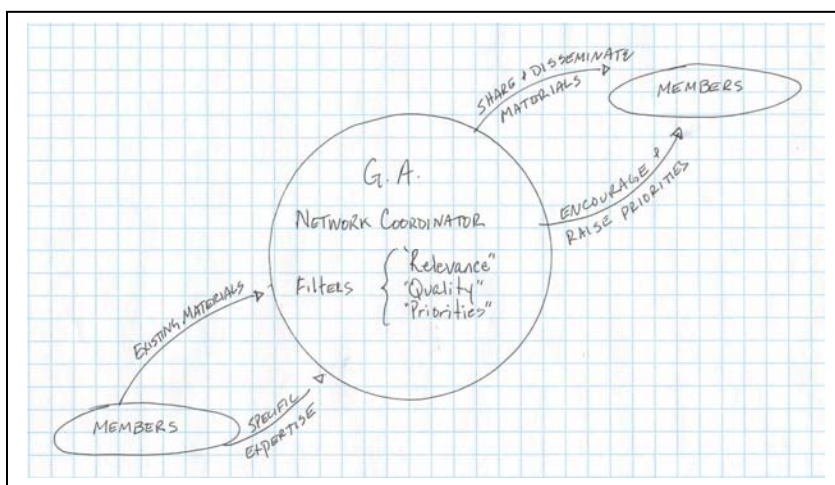
Communication:

- General list serve for GOMA and list serve specific to Education Network

Circular Structures (or “the bloodshot eyeball vs. the fertilized egg structure”)



Spiraling Universe



Group Four

- Lee at top, Sea Grant and Dauphin Island partners helping accomplish tasks, move forward.
- 2nd circle is state leads, including Mexico, EPA, and NOAA. This layer is sort of Board of Directors. Lee, Dauphin, and Sea Grant are “Executive Directors.” This group might have some burnout / stagnation, so included couple other entities (USACE, COSEE, NMEA...) – these couple extra seats would rotate to keep fresh blood in the process. Maintain interest of other groups.
- Everyone here today is part of network, and interested organizations. Not necessarily site-based. Need to include industry. Also the GoMex Citizen Advisory Committee.
- Didn’t want too many layers.

Communication:

- Info from Network members to Lee, and she disseminates it back out.

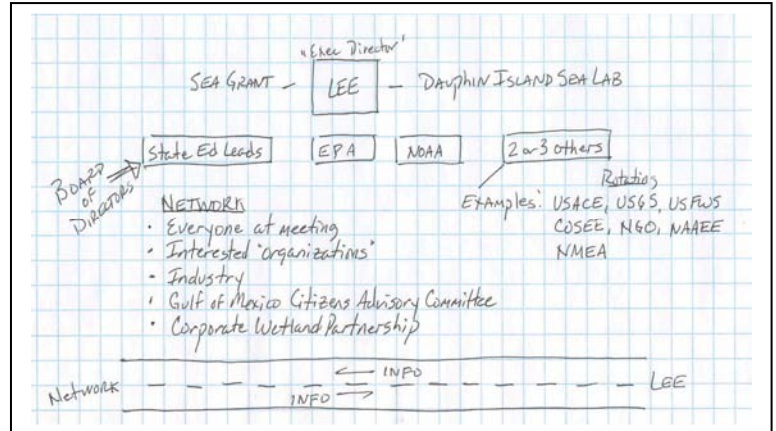
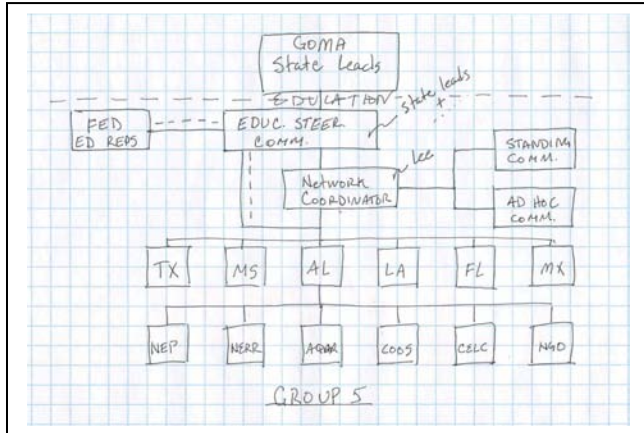
Group Five

- Gulf Alliance with state leads
- Steering committee: state leads appoint someone...maybe 10 people. This committee is the center.
- Coordinator working for steering committee.
- Steering committee developing a strategic plan, tactical plan, and Lee implements.
- Standing committees, and ad hoc committees – Lee is on all of them.
- Feds are advisory – may be on some committees, but whole thing is state led.
- Under each state have network of NEPs, NERRs, NGOs, etc. – they go up through state leads / steering committee.

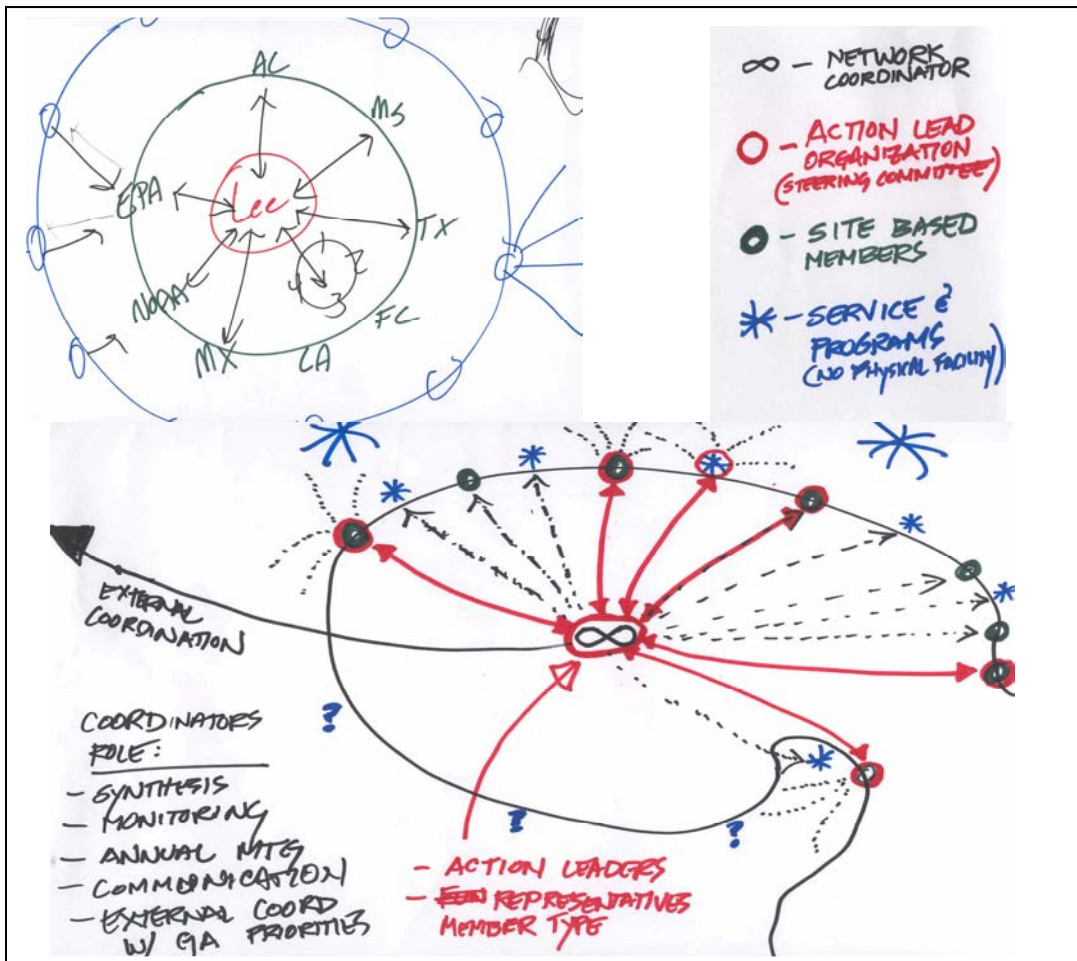
Group Six

- Saw steering committee as upper tier, sort of Board of Directors.
- As things from committees come to Lee, she’d bring to steering committee.
- Definitely form workgroups. These might look similar to the white paper groups that the Alliance had. (e.g. workgroup on underserved students)
- People here today are core working group.
- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Priority issue groups...
- Struggled with how to integrate with priority issues. Issue folks need to be aware that we’re there to help them, and we need to be aware of them.
- Lee’s protected – works for group.

Additional Drawings (including Greg's infinity spider)







Information Super Highway



Priorities

While the strategic plan is clearly identified for the Environmental Education Network, additional actions and brainstorming were prioritized into a second tier of items. These were collected over the course of the workshop and prioritized the last day. Items were broken into two categories; those actions which need initiation in the near future and those to be addressed within the next few years. Attendees voted and their top four priorities were:

-  Translating action plan in Spanish (and Vietnamese, Spanish to English)
-  Use media more creatively and effectively
-  Do community based social marketing (Identify what needs to change. Identify ways to break down barriers)
-  Elected officials know about the alliance, fund it, and support it

Many ideas were recorded, other items voted predominantly into the “near future” category included (not in order):

- Raise number of nontraditional audiences in each of our programs-make pact will research other audiences
- Do pre and post evaluation-do a survey now so can see how effective have been 5 years from now
- Learn from CTP Programs (CTP is one good model-CTP does evaluation)
- Develop a clearinghouse for educational materials/programs that already exist
- Downloadable power point presentations (and pdf version)
- Video to share across region
- Supply research on educational topics
- Exchanges (students, teachers, staff) between sites in network

Items receiving votes mostly for “several years from now” were (not in order):

- Provide citizen science activities (ex. Backyard bird counts)
- Get industry to incorporate messages with their product
- Involve celebrities from the Gulf Region
- Target specific audiences by social marketing-target specific behaviors
- Identify different stakeholders so network can deliver tailored messages
- Target the groups we are not working with now
- Presidential declaration “year of the Gulf of Mexico”
- Sponsor forums by local politicians
- Traveling exhibit (Fairs, libraries)
- Smaller exhibits that can be located outside aquariums and learning centers
- Hazards-awareness/outreach at hurricane preparedness (work with Home Depot and Loews)
- COSEE FL-grad certificate program, specifically for people working in formal and informal education (replicate program elsewhere?)
- Summer research experience for Science teachers (site based or institute at different sites)

- Develop course on translating science (partner w/ CSC)
- Outdoor education program-reward/recognize those who offer outdoor programs-educating supervisors/school boards
- Create pen pals between classes/teachers across the Gulf
- Student ambassadors
- Employ service-learning approaches

Other ideas had been mention and were recorded. They did not receive votes but have been retained for future discussions as needed.

Working Groups

The following groups were identified to continue advance of the actions. When these become more formalized, a call for further volunteers will occur. These individuals pledged to support these particular working groups.

Network Organization

- ✚ Gary Lytton, Jennifer Buchanan, Scott Jones, Wendy Sara, Bryan Fluech, Debbie Berger, Barbara Spector
- ✚ Will need to solicit participation from the state leads

CELC Establishment

- ✚ Debbie Berger, Tara Schultz
- ✚ Need inputs from federal partners such as EPA

Pilot for Underrepresented Communities

- ✚ David Guggenheim, Jennifer Buchanan, Willie Younger, Scott Jones, Bryan Fluech, Kris Shipman
- ✚ Galveston Bay estuary project has sample materials
- ✚ Lead Susan Testroet-Bergeron Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program

Website / Clearinghouse

- ✚ Wendy Sera, Scott Jones, Gaye Farris, Linda Broussard
- ✚ USGS has two year grant and started clearinghouse
- ✚ Brent Ache has also has support available

Media Campaign

- ✚ Tabitha Whalen-Stadler, Amy King, Greg Ira, Tara Schultz

Funding Coordination

NO ONE VOLUNTEERED?! FOR SHAME!!

Support other priority issue groups with education as needed

- ✚ Tabitha Whalen-Stadler (training scientists and connecting to local scientists)

- ✚ Mary Tagliarani (FL keys National Marine Sanctuary; Southeast Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Region-working with our science coordinator who will be involved in these (who is this person?))
- ✚ Randy McCormick

Next Steps

The following steps will need to be taken post-Rookery Bay workshop. This includes attending the Action Plan Implementation and Integration Workshop hosted by the Gulf of Mexico Program, July 2006, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Environmental Education Network needs to:

- ✚ Finalize and formalize the Network Organization and Function;
- ✚ Review existing websites and identify the most suitable needs for the Alliance and Network as a whole;
- ✚ Source funding, establish a communications strategy, and initiate the first steps of the media campaign;
- ✚ Create smaller working groups within the Network to accomplish various goals and actions.

More specific information from workshop attendees on individual actions (i.e. campaign, website, etc.) will be presented in tailored material to that working group. Thank you everyone for your time and contributions.